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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 001171

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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1. Mideast
2. Democratic Reform in Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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During the weekend, Friday night's suicide bombing outside a Tel Aviv nightclub dominated the news reports. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack, in which five Israelis were killed and close to 50 others were wounded. The media quoted PM Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying at Sunday's cabinet meeting that Israel will use intelligence information to prove that Syria was behind the bombing. Sharon also said that this is "not enough to absolve the PA of its responsibility for the departure of the terrorist and of its obligation to act against his partners in the crime." Leading media reported that the cabinet launched a major diplomatic offensive against both Syria and the PA. Maariv cited claims by Israeli security sources that it was Iran that pushed Islamic Jihad into carrying out the attack. The media reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice demanded that Palestinian leaders find those responsible and send a clear message that terror will not be tolerated, and that Sharon told her that talks on the road map could not begin unless there were "active steps against terrorism." The media also reported that the White House has expressed a message similar to Secretary Rice's.

Yediot reported that a plan presented at the Prime Minister's Office on Sunday is sending a "clear message" to hundreds of settler families who refuse to be evacuated under the disengagement plan: those who wait until the last moment will lose part of the benefits they are being offered -- new accommodation in southern Israel.

Yediot and Jerusalem Post highlighted Shin Bet head Avi Dichter's warning at Sunday's cabinet meeting that dozens of hard-core right-wing extremists "have the potential to commit an act of terror" against Sharon or the Temple Mount in an attempt to stop the disengagement plan.

Jerusalem Post reported that an official Jordanian source told the newspaper on Sunday that Syrian, Jordanian and Israeli Foreign Ministry officials held secret peace talks in Jordan last week.

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Ha'aretz reported that PDAS David Satterfield will meet this morning with Lebanese FM Mahmoud Hamoud after having met with the leaders of the Lebanese opposition.

Leading media reported that police are investigating suspicions that Haim Cohen, the former CEO of Himnuta, a subsidiary of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), purchased stolen Palestinian lands in exchange for bribes. Lt. Col. Yair Blumenthal, head of the infrastructure department of the GOI's Civil Administration in the West Bank, is among those who have been arrested in connection with the affair.

Ha'aretz reported that the IDF recently began to distribute "resident" stickers to West Bank settlers to be affixed to their cars' windshields. The stickers are intended to allow settlers to drive quickly through

army checkpoints along the Green Line. Based on the Shin Bet, the newspaper mentions that since the beginning of the Intifada, terror organizations had increasingly taken advantage of Israeli Arabs, with or without their knowledge.

Ha'aretz quoted officials in Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz's office as saying that a new road to Tel Romeida -- the six-family Jewish settlement neighborhood in Hebron -- is an IDF road that does not require the approval of the defense minister. The road is being paved through Palestinian-owned property in the city and expropriation of land. The newspaper says that U.S. officials have asked for clarifications concerning the road, which is slated to pass through area H2 -- Palestinian-held territory.

Leading media reported that Jordan's King Abdullah plans to visit the PA and Israel.

On Sunday, Yediot cited the Italian daily Corriere Della Sera, which quoted economic sources in Lugano, Switzerland, as saying that "someone in the Deutsche Bank branch in Switzerland" is transferring part of Yasser Arafat's money to Palestinian PM Ahmed Qurei and to Farouk Kaddoumi, the Damascus-based hard-line PLO "foreign minister." The Italian newspaper says that the transfers are meant to strengthen the Palestinian politicians' positions, unbeknown to Abbas.

Leading media reported that Iran and Russia signed an agreement on Sunday to supply uranium for the Bushehr nuclear reactor.

Yediot and Maariv reported that the GOI's anti-terror HQ has rescinded its travel warning for Istanbul.

Maariv reported on a current special cooperation project between the U.S. and Israeli defense establishments: the Defense Ministry's handicapped rehabilitation branch is helping U.S. rehabilitation branches treat U.S. soldiers who suffer from combat shock following their service in Iraq.

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[1](#)1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Not only Israelis are being targeted, but the Palestinian Authority leadership as well.... Abu Mazen, therefore, must defeat the first budding of this new Intifada at its inception."

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The only encouraging sign over the weekend is that Abu Mazen is really and truly angry. He is not Arafat, and his condemnations are not mere lip service. But now he must also take action."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "More will die so long as PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas continues to avoid the actions he must take."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "In London, Abbas can be expected to bask in the praise of those who are eager to help him overcome the obstacles on the way to consolidating his rule -- but only on condition that he exploit this opportunity for genuine progress toward peace with Israel."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "Even before Syria, Abu Mazen should be held accountable."

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in Yediot Aharonot: "The words 'territorial contiguity' that were uttered by Bush last week are code words for a Palestinian state that extends to the 1967 lines, with the possible exception of the 'settlement blocs' that [top Sharon aide Dov] Weisglass and Condoleezza Rice supposedly agreed on."

Block Quotes:  
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[1](#)I. "No Return to Terror"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in the editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (February 27): "The terror attack on Friday night bore clear signs of belonging to a new era in the terrorist war. Its targets have

shifted: not only Israelis are being targeted, but the Palestinian Authority leadership as well....

Condemnations [by Abbas and the PA leadership], with all due respect to the important role they play in promoting the reconciliation process between the two nations, are not enough.... The challenge voiced by the suicide bomber and his dispatchers to Abu Mazen obliges the latter and his government to respond decisively. Without such a response ... the situation in the territories is liable to deteriorate into an Iraq-like situation, into daily terror attacks that are aimed equally against the foreign occupier and the elected local government. Abu Mazen, therefore, must defeat the first budding of this new Intifada at its inception. He cannot afford to play patriotic games, and no one needs them.... It is against [the winds of freedom], as it is against Israel and the PA, that the 'evil trio' is pitted: the extremists and zealots in Syria, Iran and Hizbullah. They are united in their hatred of Israel, hatred of America and hatred of democracy. They are frightened, and rightly so....

From Israel's perspective, there will be no return to an Intifada of terrorism. Israel will not hesitate to use military force and to take out one-by-one all the people heading the terrorism against it, even if they are based in Syria, Lebanon and Iran. Their days are already numbered."

## II. "Bleeding for Abu Mazen"

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (February 27): "Abu Mazen, as [Shin Bet head Avil] counting on Israel's willingness to absorb a terror attack. As of Saturday, he was right. The terror attack did not even bring about the cancellation of today's meeting between Shimon Peres and Mohammed Dahlan. Just as in the days of 'We will continue with the peace process as though there were no terrorism.' But will Israel restrain itself after the next terror attack as well? As unpleasant as this is to say, it looks like this depends on the number of casualties. The only encouraging sign over the weekend is that Abu Mazen is really and truly angry. He is not Arafat, and his condemnations are not mere lip service. But now he must also take action. We have had enough of talk, and it is not certain that Israel will be able to continue to bleed for Abu Mazen's sake in the future as well."

## III. "Actions, Not Words"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (February 27): "Spare us the condemnations, at least that. For the Palestinian Authority to condemn what it has not lifted a finger to prevent is almost a waste of breath.... More will die so long as PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas continues to avoid the actions he must take. Enumerating those actions has also begun to feel like a waste of breath: collecting weapons, arresting terrorists, and ending incitement. Abbas is acting as if he has a polite disagreement with the terrorists, one that can be resolved by the usual political horse-trading. Indeed, there is little evidence that Abbas and the terrorists have more than tactical differences. The simplest measure of this is the matter of incitement.... So long as the PA continues to pump Palestinian minds full of promises of 'return' to Israel itself, the unavoidable conclusion is that the only difference between Abbas and the terrorists is tactical: one is willing to use diplomacy for a while, the other unwilling to use it at all. The only way out of this is for the international community, including Israel, to condition its support on the PA upholding its most basic commitments."

## IV. "Checks For Changes"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (February 28): "British Prime Minister Tony Blair will open an international conference in London tomorrow whose goal is to help the Palestinians help themselves.... Abbas is coming to London to sign receipts for the generous financial aid that he will be offered: hundreds of millions of dollars.... Above all, this is a deal of checks in exchange for changes. The government headed by Abbas is being asked to undertake far-reaching changes as a condition for receiving the world's support. The most important change is supposed to be a more energetic war on terror. [Secretary] Rice, in a forceful statement published after this weekend's bombing in Tel Aviv, stressed that the condemnations uttered by Abbas are not enough: the U.S. expects him to act.... In London, Abbas can be expected to bask in the praise of those who are eager to help him overcome the obstacles on the way to consolidating his rule -- but only on condition that he exploit this opportunity for genuine progress toward peace with

Israel. Only if he is wise enough to do so, by foiling future terror attacks, will the process that he and Sharon are now conducting under an international umbrella have any chance of success."

#### 1V. "Those Who Are Responsible Even Before Syria"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (February 28): "Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon too, are pointing an accusing finger at Syria, which they blame for Tel Aviv's suicide bombing. Syria indeed hosts the worst Palestinian organizations, but, even before Syria, Abu Mazen should be held accountable. For the time being, Abu Mazen is acting according to the method of this predecessor, the rogue Yasser Arafat -- the name of the wicked shall rot! He arrests two people, allegedly sends two investigators to find those responsible for the bombing, but doesn't start any serious work against the terrorists.... Abu Mazen is asking himself, and justly so: if Israel is about to abandon the Gaza Strip, why are street battles with terror organizations needed there?.... The moment Hizbullah carries out several attacks -- God forbid -- the other groups will follow suit. Meanwhile it's relatively calm, as the purpose is to gain [the release of] some more prisoners as part of Israel's gestures."

#### VI. "Waking Up to the Day After"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in Yediot Aharonot (February 27): "Had the Israeli cabinet ministers some animal sense, their ears would have perked up as early as last week. President Bush, the one who has been the best friend Israel has ever had in the White House, spoke last week in Europe briefly in support of 'territorial contiguity' for the Palestinian state.... The words 'territorial contiguity' that were uttered by Bush last week are code words for a Palestinian state that extends to the 1967 lines, with the possible exception of the 'settlement blocs' that [top Sharon aide Dov] Weisglass and Condoleezza Rice supposedly agreed on. What that means is that the Americans and the world expect chapter two to involve an Israeli dismantling of at least 100 Israeli settlements, including some of the oldest in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]. The Americans will say that they warned us after the Six-Day War not to annex the territories and not to build settlements, but we defied them. Everyone is writing and talking about disengagement, the evacuees who are deserving of our sympathy, and civil war. All that is important, but it is more important to know what will happen on the day after."

#### 12. Democratic Reform in Mideast:

##### Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "If Mubarak were sincere he would grant would-be candidates like [head of Al-Ghad (Tomorrow) Party Ayman] Nour access to state-run newspapers and television. Naturally, it would help if he first released him from prison."

##### Block Quotes:

##### "Cairo Spring"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (February 28): "On the theory that democracies do not go to war with other democracies, Israel has a profound interest in seeing Cairo's regime become more representative. Secretary Rice has been calling on the world to 'apply what Natan Sharansky calls the "town square test"' -- if a person cannot walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment or physical harm, then that person is living in a fear society, not a free society.' By that criterion, Egypt remains unfree. If Mubarak were sincere he would grant would-be candidates like [head of Al-Ghad (Tomorrow) Party Ayman] Nour access to state-run newspapers and television. Naturally, it would help if he first released him from prison."

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